



World Turtle Day 2025

[Source: TOI](#)

World Turtle Day is observed annually on **23rd May** to highlight the importance of conserving **turtles** and **tortoises**.

- The day was **established in 2000** to **raise awareness and promote conservation** of **turtles and tortoises** globally.

What are the Key Facts Related to Turtles?

- **About: Turtles (*Order Testudines*)** are **reptiles** distinguished by a **cartilaginous shell** developed from their ribs, forming a **protective shield**.
 - Unlike other animals with shells, **turtles cannot shed or exit their shell**, as it is an **integral part of their skeleton**.
- **Habitat:** Turtles can live in **both freshwater** and **marine (sea) environments**.
- **Different From Tortoise:** **Tortoises** differ from other turtles primarily by being **strictly terrestrial**, while **many turtle species are partially aquatic**.
 - Although **all tortoises are turtles**, not all turtles are tortoises.
 - Both are generally shy, solitary animals that lay eggs on land by burying them in nests.
- **Key Features:** Turtles are **cold-blooded (ectothermic)** species, i.e they can **regulate their body temperature by moving between warmer and cooler environments**.
 - Like other ectotherms such as **insects, fish, and amphibians**, they exhibit **slow metabolism** and can **survive extended periods without food or water**.
- **Key Species:**
 - **Sea Turtles:** Loggerhead Turtle, [Green Turtle](#), Hawksbill Turtle, Leatherback Turtle, [Olive Ridley Turtle](#), and Flatback Turtle.
 - **Freshwater Turtles:** Snapping Turtle, Painted Turtle, Red-eared slider Turtle, Spiny Softshell Turtle and Musk Turtle etc.

Few Turtle Species



Loggerhead Sea Turtle

- Species of oceanic turtle
- Spend most of their life in saltwater and estuarine habitat
- IUCN status: **Vulnerable**

Leatherback Turtle

- The largest of the seven species of sea turtles
- Able to maintain high body temperature using metabolically generated heat
- IUCN status: **Critically Endangered**



Green Turtle

- Named after the greenish colour of their cartilage
- Found in tropical and subtropical waters
- IUCN Status: **Endangered**

Olive Ridley Turtle

- Smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles
- Carnivores
- They practice Unique Mass Nesting called Arribada
- IUCN Status: **Vulnerable**



#FewTurtleSpecies

What is the State of Turtle Species in India?

- **Species in India:** India is home to **30 species of freshwater turtles**, 26 of which are listed under **Schedule I** of the [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#).
 - Assam, West Bengal & Uttar Pradesh have high **turtle diversity**.
 - India also hosts **5 sea turtle species: Olive Ridley, Green, Loggerhead, Hawksbill, and Leatherback**. All of which are protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- **Protection Status** (as per the [IUCN Red List](#)):
 - **Olive Ridley, Loggerhead, and Leatherback:** Vulnerable
 - **Green Turtle:** Endangered
 - **Hawksbill Turtle:** Critically Endangered
- **Threats:** Turtles face severe threats from **habitat destruction, climate change, plastic pollution, and illegal wildlife trade** for meat, pets, and traditional medicine, with Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal being major trafficking hotspots.

- **Conservation Efforts:** UP leads in conserving turtles by establishing **turtle conservation centres** in **Kukrail (Lucknow)**, **Sarnath (Varanasi)**, **Chambal (Etawah)**, and a **30 km Turtle Sanctuary in Prayagraj**.
 - The Forest Department **actively curbs illegal trade**, especially in Pilibhit, a major trafficking hotspot identified in [WCCB's Operation Kurma](#).
 - To enhance efforts, a **Turtle Conservation and Research Centre** is being set up in [Pilibhit Tiger Reserve](#) along **River Mala**, funded by [CAMPA](#).

Read More: [Olive Ridley Turtles in India](#), [Illicit Trade of Tortoises and Hard-Shell Turtles](#)

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Which one of the following is the national aquatic animal of India? (2015)

- (a) Saltwater crocodile
- (b) Olive ridley turtle
- (c) Gangetic dolphin
- (d) Gharial

Ans: C

Q. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Some species of turtles are herbivores.
2. Some species of fish are herbivores.
3. Some species of marine mammals are herbivores.
4. Some species of snakes are viviparous.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (d)